Chapter
3

Assessment Guide for Educators

A guide to the 2014 assessment content from GED Testing Service

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The Development Cycle of a Short Answer Item

The new GED® assessment will feature a variety of item types that will allow us to measure the full breadth and depth of each of the four content areas: mathematics, RLA, science, and social studies. Short answer (SA) items will appear on both the Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA) Test and Science Test. SA items will allow us to measure a wide range of skills identified in the assessment targets of both content areas at a higher cognitive level than traditional multiple choice (MC) items.

This chapter focuses on the SA item development and scoring processes.

Measuring Complex Content through Short Answer Items

The tasks that appear in SA items will be much more like problems the GED® test-takers will encounter in their daily lives, whether writing papers or reports in a postsecondary course of study, or problem solving in the workplace. Although MC items continue to be a proven, reliable method for obtaining information about a test-taker's mastery of various skills, SA items will allow us to observe how test-takers apply a wider variety of cognitive strategies to the same content in a more authentic, real-world environment.

Multiple choice items will continue to appear on all four content areas of the new GED® assessment. Each multiple choice item will have four answer options with only one correct answer.

For more information about each item type and how they will be used in each content area, see the GED® Content Terminology Short Reference and the Item Types Across Content Areas section in the Assessment Guide for Educators Chapter 1 document.

Science and RLA Test Examples

Science Test MC Item:	Science Test SA Item:
Identify which step [out of four listed] would produce a particular outcome in a scientific process?	Design an experiment to test the hypothesis [given in the stimulus]. Be sure to include descriptions of your data collection process and data analysis in your response.
RLA Test MC Item:	**RLA Test SA Item:**
Which statement [out of four listed] reflects a conclusion about the judicial branch of the U.S. that can be drawn from information in the passage?	Describe one logical conclusion that can be drawn from information in the passage. Use multiple pieces of evidence from the passage to support your description.
Advantage: SA items allow test developers to access a higher level of cognitive complexity because they require test-takers to express a response in their own words.	

In keeping with the challenge set forth by the Common Core State Standards, SA items allow us to assess a test-taker's fluency with content and career- and college-readiness skills in a manner that reflects both the utility and the versatility of these skills.

Developing Short Answer Scoring Guides

Each SA item on the new GED® assessment will be scored on a three-point scale. For some items, the three points will be accumulated when the test-takers identify or analyze up to three specific details or correct answers. This type of SA can be scored analytically, or empirically, with one point given for each correct part in a test-taker's response. Other items, however, will be scored holistically. In these items, each point will reflect a range of possible test-taker responses, with varying levels of correctness. This style of SA is particularly effective at measuring a test-taker's skills with regard to summarizing or synthesizing information.

Because each item will have its own rules for scoring, scoring guides will be developed alongside the item itself in two stages. The completed guides will contain as broad a selection of responses as necessary to convey the types of answers that can receive full and partial credit. In the first stage of scoring guide development, test developers list possible correct answers that reflect the content target that the item intends to measure. For instance, if the SA item asks test-takers to identify three textual details that support a main idea in a passage, the preliminary scoring guide will list as many relevant phrases or sentences from the passage as necessary.

The second stage of SA scoring guide development takes place during the rangefinding process. The primary purpose of rangefinding is to select exemplars at each score point level from a representative sample of responses. These exemplars, which are drawn from the pool of responses created when the items are field tested, serve to help train both human scorers and automated scoring engines. Because test-takers can be both creative and insightful, they may come up with correct responses to a given SA item that the test developers did not anticipate when drafting the preliminary scoring guides. Therefore, SA scoring guides are often updated and completed during the rangefinding

"Because each item will have its own rules for scoring, scoring guides will be developed alongside the item itself."

process, incorporating answers or common phrasings that have been directly observed in test-taker responses during the field test.

Scoring guides broadly represent the variety of answers found in the sample pool. After finalization, the scoring guides are used with the exemplars to train human scorers. Once all items from field testing have been scored by humans, the scoring guides and exemplars are used to train the automated scoring engine. The automated engine replicates human scoring and will then be used to score items on the operational tests, ensuring that test-takers are not only measured on their demonstration of higher-order thinking skills, but that they also receive feedback on their test scores as quickly as possible.

Extended Response Scoring Rubrics

The RLA and Social Studies tests will feature one extended-response (ER) item each. These ERs will require test-takers to analyze source texts and use evidence to support their arguments. Each ER will be scored by a three-trait rubric. These three traits in the rubrics explicitly identify the qualities of test-takers' writing that are to be evaluated. For example, the development of an organizational structure is an important quality of writing that is included in trait two (see below).

In the RLA Test ER rubric, these three traits are adapted from Anchor Standards in the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy. Likewise, the traits in the Social Studies Test ER rubric are derived from the Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies. Both rubrics focus on three key elements of writing:

- Analysis of Arguments and Use of Evidence

- Development of Ideas and Organizational Structure

- Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions

On the RLA Test, test-takers will be given 45 minutes to read a source text, compose their responses, and review/edit what they have written. These responses will be scored on a 12-point scale with each trait being worth up to four points.[1]

The ER item on the Social Studies Test is similar to the RLA Test ER; however, it will be a 25-minute task in which test-takers focus on the analysis of primary and secondary source documents. Because the Social Studies Test ER is shorter than the one on the RLA Test, it will be scored on an eight-point scale. The first trait will be worth up to four points, but the second and third traits will be worth up to two points each.

> "Each extended response will be scored by a three-trait rubric. These three traits in the rubrics explicitly identify the qualities of test-takers' writing that are to be evaluated."

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1   Non-scorable exceptions, which receive a score of 0, are noted below each trait.

Reasoning Through Language Arts Extended Response Scoring Rubric

Trait 1: Analysis of Arguments and Use of Evidence	
Score	**Description**
4	• Cites relevant, specific and sufficient evidence from source text(s) to support argument(s) or explanation(s) • Thoroughly assesses validity of arguments in all of the available source text(s) (e.g. distinguishes between supported and unsupported claims, makes logical inferences about underlying premises or assumptions, identifies fallacious reasoning, evaluates the credibility of sources, etc.) • Presents purposeful argument(s) with fluid integration of ideas that square with evidence from source text(s)
3	• Cites relevant and specific evidence from source text(s) that adequately supports argument(s) or explanation(s) (may include few irrelevant pieces of evidence or unsupported claims) • Adequately assesses validity of arguments in source text(s) • Presents focused argument containing ideas that square with evidence from the source text(s), but may lack fluidity or citations may not be fully integrated
2	• Cites some evidence from source text(s) (may include a mix of relevant and irrelevant citations or a mix of textual and non-textual references) • Attempts to assess validity of arguments in source text(s), but demonstrates inconsistent understanding of valid reasoning and ability to make logical inferences based on unsupported evidence • Presents an argument that may contain simplistic use of evidence, some information not derived from the source text(s), and/or a lack of integration of textual citations
1	• Cites minimal or no evidence from source text(s); may or may not demonstrate an attempt to create argument(s) • Demonstrates minimal or no understanding of the validity or lack thereof of argument(s) presented in the source text(s) • Presents a generally unfocused, ineffective or insufficient argument(s), lacks purpose or connection to the prompt; sections of text may be copied from source, but integration within response is insufficient

Non-scorable Responses (Score of 0/Condition Codes)

Response exclusively contains text copied from source text(s) or prompt

Response shows no evidence that test-taker has read the prompt or is off-topic

Response is incomprehensible

Response is not in English

Response has not been attempted (e.g. blank)

Reasoning Through Language Arts Extended Response Scoring Rubric

	Trait 2: Development of Ideas and Organizational Structure
Score	**Description**
4	• Contains ideas that are thoroughly and logically developed, with full elaboration of main ideas
	• Contains purposeful, logical progression of ideas with details closely tied to their main points
	• Establishes an effective organizational structure that is well-suited to the message and purpose of the response as a whole; applies transitional devices strategically and effectively
	• Chooses words purposefully and carefully to express ideas with clarity and logic; consistently and strategically applies advanced vocabulary
	• Strategically applies awareness of audience and purpose of the task to enhance meaning throughout the response
3	• Contains ideas that are well developed and generally logical; most ideas are elaborated upon
	• Contains a sensible progression of ideas with clear connections between details and main points
	• Establishes an adequate organizational structure that conveys the message and purpose of the response; applies some transitional devices appropriately
	• Chooses words that adequately and clearly express ideas; occasionally applies advanced vocabulary
	• Demonstrates appropriate awareness of audience and purpose of the task
2	• Contains ideas that are inconsistently developed and/or may reflect simplistic or vague reasoning
	• Demonstrates some evidence of a progression of ideas, but contains some generalizations with little support or elaboration; details may be disjointed or lacking connection to main ideas
	• Establishes an organization structure that may inconsistently group ideas or is partially effective at conveying the message of the task; demonstrates inconsistent or weak use of transitional devices
	• May occasionally misuse words and/or choose words that express ideas in vague terms
	• Demonstrates limited or inconsistent awareness of audience and purpose of the task
1	• Contains ideas that are insufficiently or illogically developed, with minimal or no elaboration on main ideas
	• Contains an unclear or no progression of ideas; details may be absent or irrelevant to the main ideas
	• Establishes an ineffective or no discernable organizational structure; does not apply transitional devices, or does so inappropriately
	• May frequently misuse words, overuse slang or express ideas in a vague or repetitious manner
	• Demonstrates no awareness of audience and purpose

Non-scorable Responses (Score of 0/Condition Codes)

Response exclusively contains text copied from source text(s) or prompt

Response shows no evidence that test-taker has read the prompt or is off-topic

Response is incomprehensible

Response is not in English

Response has not been attempted (e.g. blank)

Reasoning Through Language Arts Extended Response Scoring Rubric

Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions	
Score	**Description**

4	• Demonstrates competent and fluent application of conventions with specific regard to the following skills:
	   1) Frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions
	   2) Subject-verb agreement
	   3) Pronoun usage, including pronoun antecedent agreement, unclear pronoun references, and pronoun case
	   4) Standard usage and task-specific appropriateness of level of formality
	   5) Placement of modifiers and correct word order
	   6) Capitalization (e.g. proper nouns, titles, and beginnings of sentences)
	   7) Use of apostrophes with possessive nouns
	   8) Use of punctuation (e.g. commas in a series or in appositives and other non-essential elements, end marks, and appropriate punctuation for clause separation)
	• Demonstrates effectively varied sentence structure and an overall fluency that enhances clarity with specific regard to the following skills:
	   1) Correct subordination, coordination and parallelism
	   2) Avoidance of wordiness and awkward sentence structures
	   3) Usage of transitional words, conjunctive adverbs and other words that support logic and clarity
	   4) Avoidance of run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments
	• Contains few or no errors in mechanics and conventions*

3	• Demonstrates adequate application of conventions with specific regard to the skills listed in the first bullet above • May demonstrate largely correct sentence structure with some variance from sentence to sentence; is generally fluent and clear with specific regard to the skills listed in the second bullet above • May contain some errors in mechanics and conventions, but they do not interfere with comprehension
2	• Demonstrates limited or inconsistent control of basic conventions with specific regard to the skills listed in the first bullet above • May contain repetitive, choppy, rambling, or awkward sentence structure that may detract from clarity; demonstrates inconsistent control over the skills listed in the second bullet above • May contain frequent errors in mechanics and conventions that may interfere with comprehension
1	• Demonstrates minimal control of basic conventions with specific regard to the skills listed in the first bullet above • Demonstrates consistently flawed sentence structure with minimal or no variance such that meaning may be obscured; demonstrates minimal control over the skills listed in the second bullet above • Contains severe and frequent errors in mechanics and conventions that interfere with comprehension OR • Response is insufficient to demonstrate level of mastery over conventions and usage

*Because test-takers will be given only 45 minutes to complete extended-response tasks, there is no expectation that a response should be completely free of conventions or usage errors to receive a score of four.

Non-scorable Responses (Score of 0/Condition Codes)

Response exclusively contains text copied from source text(s) or prompt

Response shows no evidence that test-taker has read the prompt or is off-topic

Response is incomprehensible

Response is not in English

Response has not been attempted (e.g. blank)

Social Studies Extended Response Scoring Rubric

Trait 1: Analysis of Arguments and Use of Evidence	
Score	**Description**
4	• Demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the relationships among ideas, events, and figures as presented in the source text(s) and the contexts from which they are drawn • Cites relevant, specific evidence from primary and/or secondary source text(s) to support arguments or explanations • Fully engages with both prompt and source text(s) and maintains focus throughout
3	• Demonstrates an understanding of the relationships among ideas, events, and figures as presented in the source text(s) and the context from which they are drawn • Cites relevant and specific evidence from primary and secondary source texts that adequately supports an argument (may include a few irrelevant pieces of evidence or unsupported claims) • Engages with both prompt and source text(s) (may contain occasional deviations of focus)
2	• Demonstrates an understanding of the relationships among ideas, events, and figures as presented in the source text(s) • Cites some evidence from primary and secondary source texts in support of an argument (may include a mix of relevant and irrelevant textual references) • Is minimally connected to both the prompt and the source text(s)
1	• Demonstrates minimal or no understanding of the ideas, events and figures presented in the source texts or the contexts from which these texts are drawn • Cites minimal or no evidence from the primary and secondary source texts; may or may not demonstrate an attempt to create an argument • Lacks connection either to the prompt or the source text(s)

Non-scorable Responses (Score of 0/Condition Codes)

Response exclusively contains text copied from source text(s) or prompt

Response demonstrates that the test-taker has read neither the prompt nor the source text(s)

Response is incomprehensible

Response is not in English

Response has not been attempted (e.g. blank)

Social Studies Extended Response Scoring Rubric

Trait 2: Development of Ideas and Organizational Structure	
Score	**Description**
2	• Contains a sensible progression of ideas with understandable connections between details and main ideas • Contains ideas that are well developed and generally logical; many ideas are elaborated upon • Demonstrates appropriate awareness of audience and the purpose of the task
1	• Contains an unclear or no apparent progression of ideas • Contains ideas that are insufficiently developed or illogical, with minimal or no elaboration on main ideas • Demonstrates no awareness of audience or purpose

Non-scorable Responses (Score of 0/Condition Codes)

Response exclusively contains text copied from source text(s) or prompt

Response demonstrates that the test-taker has read neither the prompt nor the source text(s)

Response is incomprehensible

Response is not in English

Response has not been attempted (e.g. blank)

Social Studies Extended Response Scoring Rubric

Score	Description
Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions	
2	• Demonstrates adequate applications of conventions with specific regard to the following skills:
	1) Frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions
	2) Subject-verb agreement
	3) Pronoun usage, including pronoun antecedent agreement, unclear pronoun references, and pronoun case
	4) Standard usage and task-specific appropriateness of level of formality
	5) Placement of modifiers and correct word order
	6) Capitalization (e.g. proper nouns, titles, and beginnings of sentences)
	7) Use of apostrophes with possessive nouns
	8) Use of punctuation (e.g. commas in a series or in appositives and other non-essential elements, end marks, and appropriate punctuation for clause separation)
	• Demonstrates largely correct sentence structure with variance from sentence to sentence; is generally fluent and clear with specific regard to the following skills:
	1) Correct subordination, coordination, and parallelism
	2) Avoidance of wordiness and awkward sentence structures
	3) Usage of transitional words, conjunctive adverbs, and other words that support logic and clarity
	4) Avoidance of run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments
	• May contain some errors in mechanics and conventions, but they do not interfere with understanding*
1	• Demonstrates minimal control of basic conventions with specific regard to the skills listed in the first bullet above
	• Demonstrates consistently flawed sentence structure with minimal or no variance such that meaning may be obscured; demonstrates minimal control over the skills listed in the second bullet above
	• Contains severe and frequent errors in mechanics and conventions that interfere with comprehension
	OR
	• Response is insufficient to demonstrate level of mastery over conventions and usage

*Because test-takers will be given only 25 minutes to complete extended-response tasks, there is no expectation that a response should be completely free of conventions or usage errors to receive a score of two.

Non-scorable Responses (Score of 0/Condition Codes)

Response exclusively contains text copied from source text(s) or prompt

Response demonstrates that the test-taker has read neither the prompt nor the source text(s)

Response is incomprehensible

Response is not in English

Response has not been attempted (e.g. blank)

Reporting Category Descriptions for Content Areas

One of our goals for the score reports on the new GED® assessment is to provide additional information about areas of strength and developmental need. In order to generate this information, we have grouped indicators from each content area's assessment targets into reporting categories. Points that test-takers earn in each category will contribute to sub-scores from each content area. The primary purpose of these sub-scores will be to give guidance to both test-takers and their instructors so that each test-taker can successfully achieve his or her GED® test credential.

Below are a series of brief descriptions of the types of skills that will be assessed in each individual reporting category. The descriptions of each reporting category are illustrative, not exhaustive.

"The primary purpose of these sub-scores will be to give guidance to both test-takers and their instructors so that each test-taker can successfully achieve his or her GED® test credential."

Mathematical Reasoning Reporting Category Descriptions

Reporting Category 1: Quantitative problems in rational numbers

Examples of skills measured Mathematics Reporting Category 1:

- Demonstrating fluency with operations using rational numbers

- Using rational numbers to formulate solutions to problems set within real-world contexts

- Solving problems with rational numbers that involve proportionality

Reporting Category 2: Quantitative problems in measurement

Examples of skills measured in Mathematics Reporting Category 2:

- Engaging with geometric figures in a variety of graphic presentations

- Engaging with descriptive statistics in a variety of graphic presentations

- Using formulas or decomposition to calculate perimeter, area, surface area, and volume of figures

- Using descriptive statistics to summarize and compare data sets and understand concepts relating to basic theoretical probability

Reporting Category 3: Linear equations and expressions

Examples of skills measured in Mathematics Reporting Category 3:

- Writing linear mathematical expressions and equations that correspond to given situations

- Evaluating the expressions for specific values of the variable

- Solving linear equations, inequalities, and systems of linear equations and find the equation of a line with varying criteria

- Interpreting slope of a line as rate of change or unit rate

Reporting Category 4: Function concepts and nonlinear expressions and equations

Examples of skills measured in Mathematics Reporting Category 4:

- Understanding and applying the concept of a function

- Using function notation

- Translating a variety of representations of a function, including tables and equations

- Solving quadratic equations

- Interpreting key features of both linear and nonlinear functions

From Chapter 2: The GED® Mathematics Test will focus on two major content areas: quantitative problem solving and algebraic problem solving.

Science Reporting Category Descriptions

Reporting Category 1: Analyzing scientific and technical arguments, evidence, and text-based information

Examples of skills measured in Science Reporting Category 1:

- Analyzing scientific and technical texts to determine hypotheses, data, conclusions

- Citing evidence within the text that supports the hypotheses and conclusions

- Thinking critically about texts to determine facts versus opinion and evaluate an author's claims

- Summarizing scientific texts and evaluate key terms and relationships among concepts within the text

Reporting Category 2: Applying scientific processes and procedural concepts

Examples of skills measured in Science Reporting Category 2:

- Applying scientific reasoning skills to a broad range of content

- Creating and explaining the features of a hypothesis

- Conducting and critiquing experimental procedures

- Making generalizations and drawing valid conclusions from experimental data

Reporting Category 3: Reasoning quantitatively and interpreting data in scientific contexts

Examples of skills measured in Science Reporting Category 3:

- Using mathematical techniques to interpret and analyze scientific data

- Engaging with data displayed in various graphic formats

From Chapter 2: The GED® Science Test will focus on the fundamentals of science reasoning, striking a balance of deeper conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and the ability to apply these fundamentals in realistic situations.

- Making calculations using a variety of statistical and probability techniques

- Identifying proper measurement practices and units, including conversions between units

Reasoning Through Language Arts Reporting Category Descriptions

Reporting Category 1: Analyzing and creating text features and technique

Examples of skills measured in RLA Reporting Category 1:

- Analyzing essential elements of both literary and informational texts

- Analyzing how parts of a text fit into the overall structure

- Analyzing an author's point of view or purpose and the rhetorical techniques authors use to advance meaning

Reporting Category 2: Using evidence to understand, analyze, and create arguments

Examples of skills measured in RLA Reporting Category 2:

- Analyzing arguments and using evidence to demonstrate close-reading skills

- Identifying and evaluating an author's underlying premise(s)

- Distinguish between supported and unsupported claims, and assessing the validity of an author's reasoning

- Comparing two or more sources to analyze differences in use of evidence, interpretation, overall impact, and other modes of argument making

- Writing their own arguments in which they synthesize details, draw conclusions, and apply information from given source texts

Reporting Category 3: Applying knowledge of English language conventions and usage

Examples of skills measured in RLA Reporting Category 3:

From Chapter 2: The strongest predictor of career and college readiness is the ability to read and comprehend complex texts, especially in nonfiction. The RLA Test will include texts from both academic and workplace contexts that range from simple to complex.

- Demonstrating sufficient command of essential standard English conventions and usage Correcting common grammatical or usage errors

- Demonstrating fluency with these skills in their own writing

Social Studies Reporting Category Descriptions

Reporting Category 1: Analyzing and creating text features in a social studies context

Examples of skills measured in Social Studies Reporting Category 1:

- Analyzing primary and secondary sources for various purposes

- Identifying aspects of a historical document that reveal the author's point of view or purpose Distinguishing between unsupported claims and those that are grounded in evidence necessary for understanding concepts in the social sciences

- Determining the meaning of domain-specific words used in context

Reporting Category 2: Applying social studies concepts to analysis and construction of arguments

Examples of skills measured in Social Studies Reporting Category 2:

- Applying social-studies-specific reasoning skills to a variety of tasks

- Examining the relationships among people, environments, events, processes, and ideas and accurately describing the chronological and/or causal nature of the relationships

- Comparing different ideas within social studies disciplines such as civics and economics, and examining the implications of these ideas

- Producing writing that thoroughly and logically develops an idea, claim, or argument based on primary and/or secondary source texts

- Supporting contentions with specific textual evidence from the source texts and demonstrating an understanding of the contexts in which these documents were written

From Chapter 2: The GED® Social Studies Test will focus on the fundamentals of social studies reasoning, striking a balance of deeper conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and the ability to apply these fundamentals in realistic situations.

Reporting Category 3: Reasoning quantitatively and interpreting data in social studies contexts

Examples of skills measured in Social Studies Reporting Category 3:

- Analyzing data presented in a wide variety of formats, including maps, graphic organizers, photographs, and political cartoons

- Integrating analyses of quantitative data with analyses of written information to inform their understanding of the topic at hand

- Accurately using and interpreting graphs in order to analyze the differing ways in which variables are related to one another